



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE-LED INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN THE RECOVERY OF 16 STOLEN VEHICLES VALUED AT \$1 MILLION

Vehicles Stolen in Miami Illegally Exported to Venezuela

MIAMI- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today that 16 stolen luxury vehicles valued at approximately \$1 million were recovered from Venezuela Saturday following a multi-agency investigation by the Miami-Dade Auto-Theft Task Force.

An unprecedented investigative action resulted in the vehicles – which include Hummers, BMWs, Porsches and Mercedes – being recovered and returned to the United States via the Port of Miami.

The Miami-Dade Auto-Theft Task Force is comprised of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) and the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB).

The ICE-led investigation began in Oct. 2004 when ICE's attaché in Caracas, Venezuela, working with Venezuelan Customs authorities, received an anonymous tip related to stolen vehicles being shipped from Miami to the Port of Puerto Cabello in Venezuela.

The stolen vehicles were discovered by ICE and Venezuelan authorities at the Port of Puerto Cabello on Nov. 14, 2004. The investigation revealed that all 16 cars had been stolen from Miami and illegally exported to Venezuela.

An additional 200 stolen vehicles have been identified in connection to this investigation.

A 38-year-old Miami resident connected to this case was arrested on Nov. 9, 2004, by agents and officers assigned to the Miami-Dade Auto-Theft Task Force. This individual is in state custody pending state charges.

"Criminal enterprises that believe that they can use our ports for their illicit enterprises need to think twice," said Keith Perniciaro, ICE's Deputy Special Agent-in-Charge of the Miami office. "We will use every investigative tool and legal avenue to stop the illegal flow of stolen goods from the United States."

"Successfully curbing car theft is one of the most difficult achievements any law enforcement agency may undertake", said Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "Dade's 52 percent decrease in car theft over the last 10 years is due to smart, innovative policing and prosecution which yields results like the return of these stolen luxury cars from Venezuela."

"No matter how the jurisdiction boundaries separate us, a theft of an automobile is a crime that impacts us all one way or another," said Major Tyrone White of the Miami-Dade Police Department's Economic Crimes Bureau. "The investigation demonstrates that when law enforcement authorities collaborate with private industry something significant can occur."

The NICB estimates that more than 1.2 million vehicles worth more than \$8.2 billion are stolen in the United States each year; an estimated 200,000 were illegally exported.

The investigation into the stolen vehicles is ongoing.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is assisting with the return of the vehicles to the United States.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.